



## Take a Break with Astraware

### Feature By Denny Atkin

One big advantage Palm handhelds have over Pocket PCs is that there are literally dozens of really good games for the Palm OS. These range from simple, addictive puzzle games like [Vexed](#) to detailed, customizable role-playing games like [Kyle's Quest](#).

One standout developer has been [Astraware](#), which has been cranking out the fun games for Palm devices lately. These games fit the typical Palm software model well: most can be enjoyed even if you only have a few minutes to play, they all have free trial versions, and they're relatively inexpensive to register.

Astraware's best-known game is Zap!2000. This is one for gamers with quick reflexes and a nostalgic yearning for old shooters like Galaga and R-Type. It's your basic scrolling space shooter, where you maneuver your ship around, blasting all the bad guys and picking up a variety of power-ups. You get a bonus every time you destroy an entire formation, and if you make it to the end of a level you'll face a powerful boss alien. Fun in monochrome, the game is superb in color. If you have a Visor Prism (or presumably a Palm m505), the Zap!2016 version features 16-bit color support, giving an arcade-quality display. Although Zap!2000 is very playable with the standard buttons, it really benefits from a WorldWide Widget

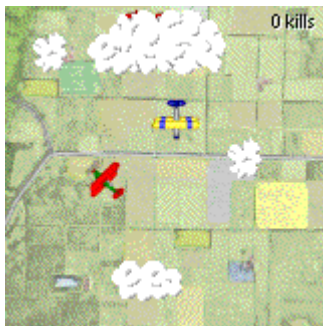
Works [GamePad](#) or Handspring [GameFace](#).

Another action game is Biplane Ace. By itself it's a bit boring-the play is similar to an old Atari 2600 plane vs. plane game, although with dramatically better graphics. However, find a friend and play the game head-to-head over an IR connection and you'll have a blast. If you just want to shoot stuff, check out Bang!Bang!, a virtual shooting gallery.

If you're looking for something a bit more cerebral, Astraware has Bejeweled! and Mahjongg. Bejeweled is a puzzle game where you simply try to swap jewels around to make matches of three like objects in a row. Sounds easy, but it's strangely addictive. Mahjongg is the classic puzzle game where you attempt to remove matching Chinese tiles from a large pile. It's a bit hard to play on the tiny Palm screen, but fans of the old Shanghai computer game will love it.

There's even a party game. Mad Gab can be played solo, but works best with two players passing the Palm back and forth. You're given a set of nonsensical words, and you have to figure out what real phrase it sounds like. For instance, "Known Who Sis Could Noose" is actually "No news is good news."

Astraware has other games its site as well, and is releasing new ones with increasing frequency. Check them out when you need a break from the serious stuff.



### Review Album to Go 2.0

\$Free; Club Photo, [www.clubphoto.com](http://www.clubphoto.com)

Album to Go 2.0 is a wonder. Here's a program that's competitive with the best personal picture viewing software for the Palm OS, and it's free. Club Photo hopes that in addition to using its software, you'll take advantage of the photo storage and reprint services it offers.

The program consists of a Windows file converter (no Mac version available, alas) and a Palm OS picture viewer. The Windows app lets you choose



Done Album 160x160 100%

pictures to transfer to the Palm and set the size (up to 1280x1024) and color depth (4-bit, 8-bit, or 16-bit). Once the pictures are HotSynced down to your

handheld, you can store them in main memory or a Springboard.

The handheld viewer is nicely improved over earlier versions. You can now select images from a thumbnail view and group them in albums. Slideshows are much quicker now. Zoom in and out on images, and view images larger than your handheld's screen. You can also beam pictures to other Palm devices.

At \$19.95, Album to Go 2.0 would be worth the money. For free, it's one of the best handheld bargains around.

-Denny Atkin

### News

#### Another New Palm Device

For the fourth week in a row, we have news of a new Palm Device. [Samsung's SPH-I300](#) is a PCS cell phone (look for it to be offered by Sprint later this year) with a 256-color screen and 8MB of memory. It supports voice dialing, and of course it runs Palm OS applications, and also allows wireless Internet access. The phone weighs in at a mere six ounces, and measures 4.9 x 2.3 x 0.8 inches. No word yet on pricing or exact availability.

#### Handspring Sales Up

According to [PC Data](#), Handspring ended February with 28% of the US retail handheld market, up from 26% in January. Palm was down to 59%, from 61% in January. Rounding out the major Palm OS devices, Sony's Clie made up 2%. Pocket PCs held only 9% of the market, with HP taking 4%, Compaq 3%, and Casio 2%. All other handheld makers combined had only 2%. It will be interesting to see how new devices slated for coming months alter the landscape.

### New Products

#### TealEcho 2.32

Are you still using that little pop-up keyboard to input characters? TealEcho will improve your Graffiti skills by showing your character inputs on the screen as you write them. Compare your input to the Graffiti guide and you'll find your recognition improves dramatically.

[www.tealpoint.com](http://www.tealpoint.com)

#### PalmCloser

No, it doesn't bring you and your handheld closer. Rather, this software helps salespeople close deals. Use the software to identify your customer's personality type, then follow the program's advice on how to best deal with that type of customer.

[www.palmcloser.com](http://www.palmcloser.com)

#### Startac Cables

Forget expensive wireless modems. If you have a CDMA Startac phone, such as the Motorola 7868, you can use it as a wireless modem for your Palm or Visor. Syncable Solutions has cables for the Palm III and V, while Cables4PDAs has them for the Visor.

[www.syncablesolutions.com](http://www.syncablesolutions.com)  
[www.cables4pdas.com](http://www.cables4pdas.com)

